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2018 Color of the Year: Ultra Violet

Mixed reactions from local tastemakers who offer design ideas.



Interior designer and watercolorist Moira Denson uses shades of violet in her paintings. Photo courtesy of Moira Denson

By Marilyn Campbell
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It's a moment that interior designers anticipate all year: the announcement of the Pantone Color of the Year. Ultra Violet is the selection for 2018, and local designers are giving it a mixed reception.

"Interiors have gone so neutral, I look forward to suggesting... Ultra Violet, a color [that] can bridge warm and cool gray neutrals," said Moira Denson, interior designer and assistant professor of Interior Design at Marymount University.

"There's nothing subtle about Ultra Violet. It's one-dimensional and difficult to decorate with, except in very small doses," said interior designer Annie Elliott of Annie Elliott Interiors and Bossy Color. "I find the color loud. 'Look at me!' It screams."

"Ever since I caught a glimpse of lavender fields on my first trip to France when I was a teenager, I've been obsessed with the color combination of deep purple and chartreuse," added Anne Walker of Anne Walker Design LLC., "I use it as often as I can in interiors. It evokes feelings of peacefulness and energy at the same time. There's a certain old-world elegance to these two colors, especially when used in combination."

The selection by Pantone, the self-described global authority on color, is intended to be a harbinger of the hue that will be on trend in the coming year. The organization's color gurus spend about nine months observing trends in industries ranging from film and entertainment to art and fashion.

This year's pick can add a burst of vibrancy to a home's interior in impermanent ways, advises interior designer Cathleen Gruver of Gruver Cooley. "Some quick easy ways to use the color are adding throw pillows, which are relatively inexpensive and easy to trade out," she said. "Accent plates on a dining table are an option for those who may not want to commit in their home."

"Use this color in extremely small doses," added Elliott. "If you really love this color, I suggest using it as part of a larger pattern. Don't buy a solid purple pillow; choose a pretty floral that has some Ultra Violet in it."

For those with less trepidation about Ultra Violet, interior designer Sarah Glenn of Braswell Design+Build in Alexandria, said, "The powder room is a great place to incorporate deep colors in interesting ways. Install a graphic violet wallpaper behind a

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Photo courtesy of Moira Denson

"Ultra violet sets a mood that allows all my landscapes to feel grounded," says artist Moira Denson, who is an assistant professor of Interior Design at Marymount University

bright white pedestal sink, or paint the ceiling a high gloss violet to reflect the decorative lighting in the room.”

Dark and dramatic cabinetry, which Glenn says is trending this year, offers another use for the Pantone pick. “Go bold and incorporate a deep violet island or base cabinets into a new kitchen,” she said. “Incorporate a violet glass mosaic tile on your shower floor or as an accent stripe around tub walls. I especially love violet glass paired with the grey and taupe tones of wooden white marble tile.”

Some designers describe Ultra Violet as commanding, particularly when used inside a home. “This shade of purple is a powerful color and one that I would use as an accent,” said interior designer Marika Meyer of Marika Meyer Interiors. “A little bit will go a long way. It is also a great color to pair with other colors, it is a very friendly complementary color.”

“In my opinion, the French powerhouse, Manuel Canovas offers the most wonderful collection of Ultra Violet fabrics on the market today,” said Walker. “I can’t wait to use as many of them as possible this year.”

“Good pairings include green and purple, a classic combination, but I’ve always liked red with purple,” added Elliott. “Ultra Violet is a vivid color, so make sure you use equally strong colors with it so it doesn’t dominate a palette.”

Pair it with gold and yellow tones, suggests Denson, who is also an artist. “I paint skies all the time,” she said. “It’s what watercolorists do. To me, shades of the ultraviolet are the most pleasing sky. It works super well with what we traditionally think of skies: blue toned. It sets a mood that allows all my landscapes to feel grounded.”

In announcing the selection, Laurie Pressman, vice president of the Pantone Color Institute described Ultra Violet as, “a blue-based purple that takes our awareness and potential to a higher level. Ultra Violet communicates originality, ingenuity and visionary thinking that points us toward the future.”